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The Black Cat

A MAGAZINE OF THE SHORT STORY

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February 25th, 1922
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The Portrait
Idwal Jones

Evidence
Sidney Waldo

Traveling Light
Harry Golden

Poison Gas
Alice Dyar Russell

Sabbath Sunshine
Ruth Kathryn Gaylord

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A first prize of $25, a second of $10, and a third of $5 are offered for the best letters, preferably typewritten, on the stories and plays published in The Black Cat from September, 1921, to and including January, 1922. If you do not have a file of The Black Cat, the seven copies will be sent to you for $.60, together with a list of suggested subjects for letters. The competition closes March 31st, 1922. Should two or more competitors submit equally valuable letters, the full amount of the first prize will be awarded to each.

Address: **Letter Editor, The Black Cat,**
Book Hill, Highland Falls, N. Y.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of the Black Cat, published twice-monthly, at Highland Falls, N. Y., for October 1, 1921.

State of New York, County of Orange: ss.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared William R. Kane, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor of The Black Cat, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, William R. Kane, Highland Falls, N. Y.; Editor, William R. Kane, Highland Falls, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Managers, none.

2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.): R. C. Smith, Highland Falls, N. Y.; E. E. Graves, Highland Falls, N. Y.; William R. Kane, Highland Falls, N. Y.; A. N. Kane, Highland Falls, N. Y.

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WILLIAM R. KANE.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1921.

GERTRUDE NELSON, Notary Public. (My commission expires March, 1923.)

On Learning to Write Short Stories

An Explanation of The Editor Council Instruction in Story Writing

You learn to write stories by writing them. There is no other way. Helpful as any reading about the writing of stories may be, and necessary and valuable as all thinking about writing them is, and priceless as all dreaming of writing stories is—you must write.

Every writer who perseveres in his work with The Editor Council learns to write stories that satisfy him, and that sell!

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The Editor Council has proved, by its success with nearly 200 students in seven years, that it can teach story conception, construction and writing.

The Editor Council realizes that the power to write fiction lies in the individual—not in the instructor—and it adapts the material of the course, and the constructive service of its critic-collaborators to the author-student's own needs.

We repeat the announcement that is the creed of The Editor Council:

WITHIN YOU IS THE POWER—or the knack, or the skill, or the talent, or the genius—that will enable you to write stories. Not in text-books on fiction technique, nor in correspondence courses in writing—but within you lies the power.

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a personal instructor who is a competent, successful, critic-author—help you to use the Council properly.

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The Editor Council,
Book Hill, Highland Falls, N. Y.

I desire to enroll for the fiction writing course of The Editor Council. I am to receive 52 Assignments and 52 Chapbooks, and the help of an individual instructor in developing and writing and revising the stories written in response to the Assignments. You agree to continue the work with me, until I have sold at least $100 worth of manuscripts after enrolling, provided my response to your help and suggestions indicates my earnest purpose to succeed in writing and selling good stories.

I enclose $110 in full payment for the course and your tuition, or

I enclose $20 as an initial payment, and agree to pay $10 each month thereafter until I have paid $120.00.

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THE PORTRAIT

By Idwal Jones

The Alexander Petroff had stupidly run aground in the middle of the river, and for three whole days the crew had been pumping water out of her, and in quite the most leisurely fashion had been patching up her bottom with the lids of tin trunks confiscated from the passengers. As a consequence, the Amur dropped greatly in the estimation of Kenneth Rumbold. He had often been wont to insist to us at the club, sometimes with a great deal of heat, that of all the main watercourses of the world, the Amur was the most stately and magnificent, the most superb in scenery, incomparable in the diversity and luxuriance of its flora and fauna.

But a week of it on the smoky Petroff was too much, even for Rumbold. He had been suffering from a bad cold. The gadflies stung damnably. There was no more jam. His stock of tea had given out, and he had to drink brick-tea, which is compounded of rice-paste, twigs and dried beetles.

Even the priest who had got on at Pokrovskaya, a patient, sad-faced man with five illegitimate children, began to grumble at the fare. So did the convicts returning to Tomsk in charge of a spectacled and bitter little army doctor. Yet nobody, not even the captain, grumbled at the loss of time. And as for the monotony, nobody minded that in the least, except Rumbold. He yearned to stamp his feet on hard soil; another boat would be along in a few days; so when the steamer miraculously reached Reinov, he disembarked, and his fellow pilgrims on the Petroff, after an affecting farewell, proceeded down to Blagovetschensk without him.

He shouldered his baggage, made his way through a swarm of welcoming herons and grebes, and walked half a mile to find Reinov nothing but a flat of baked mud, a straggling row of log houses and an uninteresting tavern. That night Rumbold was down with pneumonia. For two weeks, the village doctor and the inn-keeper's daughter nursed him back to life.

"Do you know," Rumbold used to say, sometimes, "if I hadn't been so confoundedly bored on that old scow, I should

assuredly have died and been sent down to the sturgeons, stitched up in a hammock, with some old engine bolts at my feet."

Dr. Lubimov, cross-eyed and gigantic, who was a pious man, walked to the church with him in the week of his convalescence, and they placed two large spermaceti candles to burn upon the altar.

Time passed not dully in the fortnight that followed, for Rumbold had a taste for reading, and the doctor, quite a scholar in his way and the possessor of the largest library thereabouts, some twenty or thirty volumes, had placed the books at his disposal. There were two which Rumbold could read: Mme. de Stael's "Corinne," and a text-book on fevers, both being in French. The liquor at the inn was execrable, the conversation scanty, and since the doctor was away so much on his professional visits, Rumbold found diversion in long walks among the hills back of the village.

The third day he was out on these peregrinations, with a shot-gun slung on his back and the eternal "Corinne" in his pocket, when he came across the cabin of Father Dantchenko. It was a squat little building of pine logs, with a sort of trelliced bower in front draped with climbing chanterelles, through which polished windows gleamed like many eyes. Before it was a stretch of grass, knee-high, and above it swayed files of tall hollyhocks and foxgloves, that nodded in the breeze, gesturing with their fronds like fantastic children. Their perfume was heavy in the summer air filled with the droning of innumerable bees. Something in the aspect of the place attracted Rumbold greatly, and he approached to ask for a cup of water.

The crunching of his footsteps on the gravel path had been heard in the house. In the doorway, an old man appeared, paused, then came through the bower, treading massively, supporting himself with a stout cane. A great white beard flowed down upon his chest; one hand was thrust deep into the pocket of his blouse; a huge blackened pipe hung from his lips. Rumbold saw that he was half blind.

In a quavering voice, he gave Rumbold greeting. Osip Dantchenko his name was, he said, and until his sight failed

him, three years before, he had filled with honor the post of District Captain of Reinov. Previous to that, he had been a surveyor of the Amur and the Irtysh rivers, and in his youth, he had been articled to a lawyer in Moscow. He had travelled much in his time, he said. Had Rumbold, perchance, ever journeyed to Verkhoyansk? No? Well, it was possible he would not like Verkhoyansk, being a young man. The Yahut women were cold, and to make love to them one had to turn oneself into either a seal or a walrus. The old man laughed softly.

And then, there were the Khingan Mountains—had he ever been there? A Christian man could not be happy in the Khingan Mountains; but it is good to travel in such strange fields in youth, for one can think of them in one's old age, lying in one's cot and waiting for sleep.

The old man helped himself gratefully from the tobacco pouch Rumbold offered him, with an odd dexterity that did not escape Rumbold's attention, filling his pipe and striking the match with one hand only, the other remaining thrust into his pocket.

Loquacious though he was, Dantchenko never once raised his voice above the sibilant, whispering tone in which he had first addressed his visitor. Rumbold commented upon the pleasingness to the eye of the house and its garden. The old man, with many pointings of his pipe, related something of its quiet history. The trees, the vines, the garden, the cabin itself—all had come into being within three years. He had had his Chinese servant, Son Foo, wheel the topping of fertile loam from the small alluvial gold diggings which they worked nearby. The mine was a small affair, he explained, merely a hole in the ground, worked with pick and shovel and bringing in just enough gold to barter for food at the store in Reinov.

Then within the house sounded a faint call in a woman's voice. Old Dantchenko asked Rumbold to have tea with him when he next traversed the road, and begging to be excused, turned, and in his trotting gait, hurried back to the house.

* * * * *

It was not until late in the spring, a week after the ice had broken up on the Amur, that Rumbold again came up the

river. The work of surveying and building the narrow-gauge railway from the platinum camps on the little Garshin plateau to a point on the Amur some twenty miles north of Reinov occupied him during the months of April and May. Early in June, on a ride to Reinov to visit Doctor Lubimov, he made a detour and called upon Father Dantchenko.

The old man was sitting on a bench in front of his house, smoking, with his hands crossed upon the knob of his staff. He had aged perceptibly, become thin and infirm. His increased blindness prevented him from recognizing Rumbold at once, but at the sound of his voice he recalled him, and made him heartily welcome. He was grateful for the can of excellent tobacco that had been sent him, and he had found enjoyment of a philosophic kind in the book that Rumbold had sent with it—a copy of Lyeskov's "Legendary Characters." One of the narratives he had committed to memory, and with much gusto and dramatic waving of his pipe, he declaimed it to his visitor. But he couldn't read, any more: his eyesight was about gone. And Son Foo's lack of education, he added querulously, made it out of the question for him to act as reader to him.

"Since you were here last," said Dantchenko, after a long pause, "Marsya, my wife, has died."

Rumbold, surprised, murmured a phrase of condolence.

"Marsya, my wife, lived with me for fifty years, and when she died she was aged six-and-eighty years. The Lord hath taken her back into his arms. The good Ilya Lubimov and Son Foo did all within their power to help me make her last years comfortable."

"You have a good friend in the doctor," said Rumbold, "and Son Foo, I should judge, has been a most faithful servant."

The old man nodded. "All that you see about you, he wrought to give her comfort. She said once she wanted to hear the humming of bees, for they reminded her of her girlhood days in the Transylvania meadows. Son Foo procured three swarms at the Fair, and wove for their shelter those many osier hives against the wall. Being a bed-ridden woman, sunflowers and foxgloves were a glory in her eyes. Son

Foo got the seeds, and so timed their putting in the soil that they bloomed many months in the year. He cared for the flock of hens, also, whereof we got many eggs. A dissolute boatman in Reinov lost to him at cards two little, hardy goats. Son Foo brought them here, and the doe, besides giving us her progeny, has yielded us a bountiful supply of rich milk.

"Towards the end, I could do little work in the household, but Son Foo, with his own hands, has done the work of two men."

"It is well to feel, Father Dantchenko," murmured Rumbold, "that you have no cause for regret."

"Ah, but I have!" cried the old man, and his lower lip trembled as though he were about to weep. "I have one regret that weighs upon me heavily." His great, bearded head sank down upon his chest, and for several minutes, with eyes closed, he sat immobile and silent.

He straightened up and began puffing at his pipe. "For fifty years we lived together, and not once in all that time have I had a likeness taken of her. Not even a portrait on tin such as you get in the booths at the Fairs. That," he shouted aloud, smiting his knee, "that is my great regret!"

Rumbold expostulated gently: "Can any portrait of our loved ones, Osip Dantchenko, be more enduring and present to us than the one in our mind's eye?"

The old man shook his head. "My body grows weaker, and with it, my memory. In time, her image that is before me will become fainter, and little by little disappear altogether. She has now been gone five months, and her face is now less plain to me than it was a fortnight ago. Her forehead, for instance"—he traced confusedly in the air with his pipe—"I know how it should be—yet—" His voice broke, his head sank low, and again he fell into a silence protracted and mournful. He rose from his seat, knocked out his pipe, gathered up his staff and spectacles, then beckoned to Rumbold to follow him.

Through the house he shuffled, and into a large room at the rear. It was as much a store-room as a sleeping chamber, for it was littered with belongings, tools, surveying instruments, boxes, old shoes and pipes; a cot, piled up with bear-

skin rugs, occupied one corner; above it hung an ikon, and a number of cheap religious prints were tacked on the rough, wooden walls. In the middle of the room stood a small table, and upon it was a shapeless object swathed about with wet cloths.

Slowly, and with something of the reverence of one officiating at a rite, the old man removed the wrappings, and Rumbold beheld a pile of clay, built up, kneaded and pinched into the semblance of a woman's head.

"For a little while each day, until my fingers get tired," said old Dantchenko, "I try to make clearer to my eyes the face of my wife Marsya. I have no skill at the task, and sometimes I fear it is beyond me. The clay must be kept wet, and that is not good for the fingers of an old man much troubled with rheumatism. When my time comes to die, I want to see the head of Marsya at my bedside. It will be as if she were there in the flesh."

He pressed Rumbold to stay for supper, which Son Foo was preparing with a great clatter of pots and pans in the little kitchen. But Rumbold could not prolong his visit, and departed, laden with the gift of two fowls in his saddlebag, for Reinov, before it got dark.

How vividly Rumbold describes the last night he spent in Reinov! The Amur was frozen over, and the day had been the coldest in his experience. But it was jolly enough at the tavern, whither all the people of the village were gathered, and almost all of the men from Rumbold's camp. For the occasion was the marriage of Anna Leiken, the inn-keeper's daughter.

The guests banquetted royally on roast goose with pickled sloes, boiled rabbits and salmon caviar, all washed down with buckets of vodka and champagne. There was revolting drunkenness. The din from the accordions was terrific, and outside on the red baize before the door, immense dogs wrangled spitefully over the leavings from the feast.

Four Yahut drivers came in with their reindeer bells, and jangled them riotously to endless songs of their own improvisation. The men, clad in heavy woolen shirts and leather breeches, coatless and sweating profusely, danced with the

bleating women. Dr. Lubimov, in full evening dress, high boots and without a collar, was master of festivities. The foulness of the air was appalling. At midnight, Rumbold, almost suffocated, pulled on his fur cap and sheepskin overcoat, and staggered outside for a sobering walk down the road.

When he returned and stood hesitating before the tavern, a little afraid to kick his way through the pack of snarling, bloody-eyed Buriat dogs, the door opened in a blaze of light, and Doctor Lubimov, wrapped in a fur cloak, came stumbling out. His sledge was waiting, with Bobo, the tavern hostler, at the heads of the impatient ponies.

"Come on for a ride!" shouted the doctor, as he tumbled into the sledge.

Rumbold jumped in, nothing loath, and packed the robes tightly about them. Bobo leaped aside, and next moment they were flying onward in the night. Overhead the encrusted sky hung low, each separate star picked out and glittering like an icicle. The nights are glorious in the country of the frozen Amur, the king of Siberian rivers.

The ponies went scudding over the packed snow like jack-rabbits. The frosty air slashed like a multiplicity of razors at their faces, and it was more exhilirating than wine. Rumbold thought with horror of the foul air in the tavern; a fortune would not have dragged him back to that mephitic festal room.

Forward the ponies leaped for more than an hour, the frozen snow crackling under the runners like the swish of tearing silk. Rumbold, silent and expansive, gloried in the sense of vast, illimitable space. Then, as the starlight began to reveal familiar characters in the landscape—"Father Dantchenko?" he queried.

"Osip Dantchenko!" shouted the doctor through his beard. "He is on his death-bed, and I fear I am late. But not archangels could do anything for old Osip. A stroke paralyzed his arm last week. Been quite blind, too, for months; advanced glaucoma, you know. Years ago, up on the Irtysh headwaters, he froze his other arm, and he never recovered the use of that hand. I was always sorry for old Osip Dantchenko."

Son Foo, swathed in heavy furs and pacing on the snow before the house like a perturbed bear, was awaiting the doctor's arrival. He ushered them within.

The old man, propped up with pillows, was sunk in his low arm-chair before the fire. Scarcely breathing, and with his great, patriarchal head bowed down upon his chest, he seemed no longer alive. Back of his master's chair, impassive, with folded hands, stood Son Foo, his gnarled face looking like nothing so much as an ancient mahogany carving that had been hung in a smoky chimney place for a generation.

Dr. Lubimov removed his cap and cloak, intently gazing at his patient the while, then drew up a chair and seated himself. He spread out his cigarette case upon his knees, smoked, and with his glasses upon his beaked nose, he looked like a gigantic and benevolent old owl. Son Foo bestirred himself and placed strong drink before them.

Old Dantchenko's lips began to move in a murmur that was barely audible. Dr. Lubimov bent forward his head to listen, and for a minute the voice flowed on drowsily, struggling weakly for articulate expression, almost overborne by the sound of the flames soaring in the great chimney. Dr. Lubimov nodded, and retaining his touch on the old man's pulse, turned to the servant.

"He speaks of the head of Marsya. Hasten, Son Foo, and bring him the head."

The Chinaman shuffled off immediately. It may have been the solemnity of the moment that had rendered more acute Rumbold's senses; perchance, and towards this he inclines to believe, it might have been merely his fancy, though Dr. Lubimov told him afterwards that it was just then that he himself experienced the premonition, but the padding footsteps of the Chinaman seemed inept, most strangely augurial of impending calamity. They heard him whimpering and stifling lamentations as he stumbled about in the dark back room. And then the house filled with a horrid clamor. There was no mistaking the sound: the splintering crash of plaster that followed the thud of a body upon the floor. "The bust of Marsya was shattered!" Son Foo cried out, and Rumbold half rose to his feet in terror. Dr. Lubimov, with his fingers

still on the old man's wrist, goggled over his spectacles, with mouth open like one dumbfounded.

When they turned their eyes, they beheld Son Foo framed in the doorway. Slowly his body lowered until he sank to his knees. He smote his hands above his head, and there he remained, shrunk and crouching, moaning like a Cassandra.

Old Dantchenko's voice halted on an imperious note. Dr. Lubimov stalked over to the doorway, picked up the Chinaman as though he were an infant, and carried him over to the old man's side.

"This is the head of your Marsya, Father Dantchenko," said the doctor, drawing the dying man's arm about the neck of his servant. In his great arm the doctor lowered his burden so that Son Foo's face touched the upturned, searching countenance of his master. Rumbold snuffed out the light. In the darkness Father Dantchenko droned a long blessing to his Marsya, and ended it with a loud kiss.

It was all over by the time Rumbold found matches and relighted the candle, and Dr. Lubimov, in haste to rejoin the good company at the tavern, was throwing his cloak over his shoulders.

It rather annoyed Rumbold, but all the way back to Reinov, Dr. Lubimov laughed uproariously at him for blowing out a blind man's candle.

EVIDENCE

By Sidney Waldo

She had been dead a year: January tenth. He recalled how peaceful she had looked, after her struggle—her white face against the pillow. He glanced at his watch. Within the hour it would be a year exactly.

This exactness was for her.

Always she had been precise about dates. They had meant a great deal to her; she had looked ahead and planned for them. He remembered the time when he had forgotten their wedding anniversary. At noon, conscience-stricken, he

had telephoned to her from his desk at the office, to be greeted by her laugh, her gentle chiding. And now, such memories were all he had to live for. Not one should he ever forget. And she, too, would remember.

His eyes went back to his book. But he had read less than ten minutes before his attention wandered again. By this he saw that it was useless, and turned the book face down on his knee. With the near approach of the hour he found that the excitement and suspense unsettled him completely. If she were ever to give him the token she had promised—something by which he might recognize her—if, from her new surroundings, she could perceive him in this familiar log-walled room, she would unquestionably make her great effort now.

He got up from the low chair, stirred the fire, put on fresh wood, glanced at his watch again. It was midnight. Robert, his man, had been asleep for a long time. The room had grown cold. He shivered.

He must have faith! It would depend so much on him. His hands thrust deep in his pockets, he walked, with quick nervous steps, back and forth across the floor. Before the fire again, he paused, reached up to the rough plank mantle, found and lit a cigarette. Already, since supper, he had smoked a dozen. He tried to relax. This tension, he knew, might be an impenetrable barrier to her.

He saw the danger he ran, and recognized the folly, the weakness he would be guilty of if he did not force himself to be calm. Otherwise, he might defeat the very purpose of his coming here, so far north into the wilderness. He had wanted to cut himself off from every disturbing influence. More than that, the very stabs of memory with which this cabin tortured him would make, he felt, a closer tie between them. She, too, would remember those crisp October mornings of their honeymoon, when they would wake in the little room under the eaves, and look out, across the still mirror of the lake, to limitless solitudes; how, at last, he would reluctantly get up to light a fire in the stove—only to have her entice him back again under the rough blankets, where, with her head against his shoulder, she would forbid him to stir until

the room grew warm—It was like yesterday. By what justice were they to be denied a tomorrow? He turned, with a swift gesture, away from the fire. She could not fail him here.

In what he had felt to be the clearer vision of their last days together, they had both been sure that this could be no eternal parting. Neither of them religious by the terms of any church or creed, they had turned to the newer and—to them—the more comprehensible and hopeful evidences of spiritualism; and at the time both had been convinced. She was just going on a journey—not even beyond communication—where, his work here accomplished, he would presently follow. Her last words had been "Au revoir."

Recalling this, it came to him as something of a shock that his faith had ebbed a little. No longer could he feel absolutely certain. And this weakening, this backsliding, impressed him as a sort of sacrilege. He wanted his faith so desperately; and it had slipped away.

He looked back to the time, right after her death—the first month or two—when he had been so full of hope and confidence. Long evenings, sometimes extending into the morning hours, he had spent alone at his writing table, a pencil in his hand, poised over blank paper; waiting for her to guide his fingers to the words of a message. Night after night he had tried; night after night he had failed. Yet never had he doubted an ultimate victory.

He saw it now as merely that he had never admitted his doubt. As months had gone on, his failures had become heart-breaking; because they could but seem failures at last; rather than simply periods of practice and adjustment. The time would come— Yet even now he balked at that fearsome issue. And a tremendous protest rose in him which made him snatch up the book he had been reading and slap it down hard against the table—as though he felt the whole thing to be a lie. And the tranquility which he had summoned fled.

He swung off about the room once more, feeling a little guilty over his outburst; feeling again that it was sacrilege. How it would wound her—if she knew! And all at once he saw, in his mind's eye, a strikingly vivid image of her face,

the expression wistful and beseeching; he almost felt that he could see her lips move, as if she might be pleading with him.

This brought him up sharply, just as these mental pictures of her always did. He saw them often, mostly on the instant of going to sleep. But this one had been perhaps clearer than any before. It sent his thoughts along new channels, lulled his impatience a little.

This clear remembrance of her made him feel, sadly, how imperfect any feature would be unless he found her, in the new surroundings, exactly as he had known her here. He wanted to think that her body survived. The mere survival of her identity would not satisfy him; because this, although precious beyond imagining, would be incomplete. He felt that he would need the power to look into her eyes—to see the dancing lights in them. He would want to see her coming toward him, smiling, her hands stretched out, walking with that characteristic quick and eager step. He would be hardly able to wait for the pressure of her arm through his, when—as in the past—they strolled off together. Without these things, it seemed to him that they would both be harrowed by longings.

Never had he felt these longings with such intensity. To walk with her! The impulse was overpowering. He felt a consuming restlessness again; saw that he could not cope with these baffling moods; and all at once he knew that he must get out doors—or they would pull him all to pieces. His hat and coat and mittens hung on a nail beside the door. He took them down and put them on and hurried out.

He found the air sharp—even for that time of year and latitude. The stars gleamed like scattered jewels on black velvet. He stepped from the piazza directly to the surface of the snow, which was so deep that it had covered up the steps; so packed and hard, with this cold, after days of mild weather, that he could walk without snow-shoes. As he slipped down through dim crowding spruces to the sharply defined margin of the lake, he had an odd sensation—travelling so high—as though he were gliding among the upper branches, like a bird.

When he had reached the lake, he wanted to stop and light another cigarette. But he resisted the impulse. Something

impelled him to hurry on. He found that his excitement, his sense of imminence, was growing. Something outside his consciousness was tugging at him, stirring him, flooding him with that urging toward great accomplishment which he sometimes got from music.

He let these sensations sweep him out further and further from shore. Strange fancies came to him: that in this remote, uninhabited region, all the great forces which ruled mankind might be hatched; might be matured in these solitudes, to be sent out over the world; that here, unendangered by all the anchors of human traffic, the connecting cables might issue forth into the surrounding universe; that at this moment he might be feeling these forces at first hand. His images made him laugh. He felt a strange mental buoyancy. Attracted by the light dusting of fresh snow, over the crust—from a flurry that afternoon—he bent forward, scooped up a handful, and blew it away, like down.

He hurried on. His padded footfalls made no sound. Again he was in a fever of impatience, as though this journey in the night aimed at some definite goal; as though, a little late, he speeded to a rendezvous.

Reaching what seemed the very centre of the lake, with the dim shore a distant ring all round him, he was conscious of a strong admonition to stop. And he jerked himself back to saner reasoning. Had he forgotten the time? To snatch out his watch took him but a second. By the illuminated dial he saw that it lacked only a minute or two of the hour. So, after all his preparations, he had nearly forgotten! He became tense again, and instantly his care-free joyousness deserted him.

At the time of leaving the cabin he had formulated no definite plan. He was still without one. And this troubled him. What sort of message he hoped for, he did not know. Now that it was too late, he recognized his folly in having made no preparation. At least he should have brought with him pencil and paper for one final, supreme effort at automatic writing. And he had nothing. In desperation, he dropped to his knees, and with his finger, made a few vague marks in the snow.

This was the best that he could do. If she, on her end, could guide his hand to the formation of written words—which did not too obviously emanate from his own yearnings—that would prove her existence somewhere—in some form. If he could have only that much— He tried to feel that this would, after all, satisfy him, tried not to hark back to that greater longing—that cry from his soul—for evidence of her substantiality. Shifting his position, he extended his forefinger above the unbroken snow.

The hour, he knew, had come; and yet he felt no movement, no tremor. He was thinking of her—seeing her, almost—with a distinctness which in a calmer mood would have startled him. And he tried to take courage from this, not to let himself feel that it was a sign of failure: that he was doing his all, and she not responding.

Minutes went by. His mental picture of her, he realized, depicted her in her familiar fur hood—dressed as she would be dressed if she were here beside him. He dismissed the thought that this was due to his own great longing. He wanted to regain that unaccountable feeling of accomplishment.

Gradually he felt this confidence flooding him again—a vague thing, altogether beyond any process of reasoning. He gave himself up to it. And presently he found that he had withdrawn his hand; that he was to get no writing. Oddly, it struck him as a fortunate happening. For all at once he seemed to be waiting for something bigger. Raising his eyes from the snow in front of him, where he had been looking so intently, he gazed off toward the distant shore from which he had come.

And then he saw— And what he saw—for all his preparation—left him breathless and shaken. He saw, along the white level of the lake, the straight line of footprints which he had made, in the light dusting of snow, on his way out. He saw them distinctly—almost as clearly as he might have seen them by day—but that was nothing. For what he stared at was another trail, beside his own, and just as clearly defined: the prints of smaller feet, which must have kept—step by step—an even pace with his.

He looked and looked. Not that he questioned what he

saw. But he was not quite steady yet. And he tried to follow them back, as far as he could see—until they were lost together in the half luminous darkness. For presently, with his eyes, he would follow this smaller trail forward—to see where it ended.

Slowly, he began. The two came on together. All his wild feelings of exaltation as he strode out here, he could explain now. Still, they were together. At last he had to turn almost around; for the small trail had passed behind him, into the trampled snow, where he had moved about, before he got down to write. And then he observed how it swung round him in a semi-circle, as he had knelt in the snow. She had been waiting, too, in a little trampled area, just beyond reach of him, while she had helped him to free his mind of its doubting.

He could not be sure whether, at this moment, he actually saw the trail take form. He only knew that where before there had been nothing, the footprints had come. They were there on the very spot where he had hoped to write a message from her. How infinitely finer was her fulfillment of this message than anything which he had planned!

And here the trail ended. She had come now within a few inches of him and stood, in that way he knew so well: her feet close together, firmly and evenly planted. Still kneeling, he looked up to where her eyes must be—to where they must be watching him with their familiar tenderness.

He may have breathed her name. Perhaps she had answered. He was conscious of understanding and peace. She had not changed. When the time came, she would be waiting for him.

* * * * *

He did not know how long this lasted—whether seconds or hours. She had been there—and was gone; the period, immeasurable. He sighed and rose from his knees. He was thinking about time: the minutely reckoned span of a life. Minutes and days and years! It all seemed trivial—in this fleeting glimpse of her he had felt the promise of eternity.

TRAVELING LIGHT

By Harry Golden

The traveler came out of the moonlight and paused beside the little square of lamp light on the snow in front of the crossroads store. A sleigh approached from the opposite direction, and with a tinkling of bells the horses came so close to the stranger before halting that for a moment it seemed they would trample him under foot. But the stranger did not become excited over this seemingly narrow escape from being run down; he merely smiled an odd, thin-lipped smile and stood his ground.

A large man wrapped to the ears in a great bear skin coat climbed stiffly down from the sleigh, turned his team over to a waiting boy, and headed for the store door. The traveler entered the door as the man in the bear skin coat opened it, and he passed on within the store as the other turned to close the door behind them.

In the center of the store stood a big, old-fashioned boxwood stove, glowing dull red through a haze of tobacco smoke. Seated about the stove were a half dozen villagers, talking and laughing in neighborly fashion. They hailed the man in the bear skin coat; but they seemed to pay no attention to the smaller one of the pair, as the two newcomers came to join the circle about the stove.

The big man unbuttoned his coat, removed his hairy mittens, and lifted the ear flaps of his fur cap. He shivered, and his teeth chattered a little as he crowded closer to the stove with his arms spread wide.

"Right snappy evenin' to be out in, eh, Martin?" remarked one of the old-timers. "Where ye been this time o' night?"

"I was up on the Burson tract lookin' over some post timber," returned the man addressed as Martin, his voice a little shaky. "I started back on the corduroy road; but it was gettin' so late I took a short cut." He paused and then continued significantly: "I came back past the Peavy House!"

The group of listeners came to attention with a jerk. Two of the old men took their pipes from their mouths and

leaned toward the speaker. One of them voiced a question:

"See anything thar that 'peared strange?" He finished the sentence with a short laugh, as if he wished to imply that his question was meant for more than half a joke.

"I did," answered Martin in serious tones. "I see old Peavy Joe—old Peavy Joe Graham hisself!" He paused and looked around at the circle of faces, after the manner of a man challenging contradiction.

A big, awkward young fellow on the opposite side of the stove took up the challenge, a little tentatively.

"Yer might 'a' been scared and imagined ye seen ol' Peavy Joe," he said.

Martin glared at the speaker.

"I'm tellin' ye, Clem Johnson, that I seen old Peavy Joe, not more'n an hour ago, as plain as I see you a-settin' there. Now tell me plain an' slow like that I was scared an' that I just imagined that I seen him!"

Johnson ran his eye over the bulky frame of Martin.

"All right, neighbor," he replied with a sheepish grin. "I ain't the man to contradict ye. War ye there a lookin' fer the jewelry? A pretty fat haul that satchel full o' gold an' diamonds would make, accordin' to all accounts. I ain't never heard of no one findin' it. It must still be there in the Peavy House somewheres."

"No, I warn't there a-lookin' for the jewelry!" retorted Martin. "An' I bet there ain't a one o' ye here ever been there a-lookin' for it either. I'll bet there ain't a one o' ye ever been near the old Peavy House since the night of the big riot. Ye all got a fear of the Peavy House, an' a fear—a mighty fear—o' ol' Peavy Joe. Now let's hear some one of ye deny it!"

The traveler had pricked up his ears at these references to the satchel of jewelry. Perhaps he, too, knew something about the old Peavy House, and about old Peavy Joe. But, unlike the others, he seemed to have no fear concerning either the house or the man in question. His thin lips twisted half in scorn, half in amusement, at the marked uneasiness that rippled round the circle.

Again Johnson spoke:

"Tell us how come ye passed by the Peavy House an' what ye see there."

"Well, it was like this," Martin went on to explain: "I took the cut-off, as I said, just to get me home quicker. I didn't think it was so late; but the night had settled down, an' the moon was shinin' bright on the snow, when I came out into the clearin'. When I come abreast the big front window in the barroom, ol' Peavy Joe was a-standin' there as plain as ever I seen him afore. When I passed the house I turned my head, an' I seen him a-standin' in the window o' the dinin' room. He waved his arm at me—his stub arm—an' I could see the moonlight a-gleamin' on the iron hook."

Martin thrust out his big jaw again in a menacing attitude.

"Well?" he asked, as he looked from face to face about the circle. No one contradicted him this time. There was only a nodding of heads in assent; and two or three of the old men hitched their chairs a little closer to the stove.

"I guess I'll go on over home," remarked Martin, "an' see if the old woman can rustle me up a bite of somethin hot." He turned to leave, and the slim traveler drew his thin coat tighter about his throat and followed him through the door and into the cold again.

It seemed that no one around the stove in the store had paid any attention to the traveler's entrance, to his presence, or to his departure. In fact, it seemed as if they had not noticed him at all. And all the time the traveler had been among them he had spoken no word. He had stood silently, a little amused at the strange speech of Martin, and at its effect upon the gathering. His lips had moved only with the same odd smile that had twitched them before.

The night was very cold, and the traveler drew his flimsy coat tighter across his narrow chest, as he walked briskly over the crust of the snow with a light, tireless step. He passed beyond hearing of the last settlement and an absolute silence settled all about him; but he held steadily on, seeming not to mind the loneliness.

Finally the hunger howl of a wolf pack broke the silence. It sounded first from deep within the woods at the traveler's

right, and then grew louder as it rapidly neared the choppings. The wolves, gaunt and gray, skimming in long, regular strides with bellies close to the crust of the snow, crossed the road on the rim of a big circle that marked their course. They passed in front of the traveler—within a few rods of him—without slackening their pace or paying him the slightest heed, and then disappeared far off across the clearing where the flat white light greyed to the tint of their own grey coats. The traveler did not slacken his own pace; nor did he show any sign of having noticed the wolves, save for the flicker of a smile that had brushed his lips at their passing.

He crossed a narrow strip of timberland, and there in the next clearing he came upon the old Peavy House insolently flaunting its dilapidation in the glare of the moon. Dark, frameless windows stared at him unblinkingly, and as he stared back at them, he quickened his steps across the frozen snow. He was again smiling the thin-lipped, twisted smile as he crossed over the threshold of the open front door.

Streaks of dead-white moonlight mottled the darkness of the big front room which had once served as a barroom. In patches leprous white, the light flecked the broad stairway where lay dust and debris, the accumulation of ten years. The traveler chuckled to himself. If Peavy Joe were hiding out here in the Peavy House, as rumor would have it, there wasn't evidence of that fact on the face of things. The traveler was looking for old Peavy Joe now, with what one might call a hungry eye; but he could not see him.

As he stood there peering about the great, bare room, past patches of light into blotches of shadow, a sound as if of the clanking of a chain fell upon his attentive ear. The sound came from somewhere in the rear of the house. He turned and passed through the dining room, and into the kitchen beyond.

At the end of the kitchen he saw, in the dim light, an old man sitting dejectedly before a great fireplace, the hearth of which was lighted only by a stray trickle of moonlight. One of the old man's arms terminated in an iron hook, and the hook was caught in one link of a heavy log chain which lay stretched out on the floor. Evidently the old man had

dragged the chain there. The traveler spoke; and the old man beside the cold, empty fireplace whirled about, blinking a pair of bleary eyes in surprise.

"Why are you sitting here alone, old man? Aren't you cold?"

The old man shook his head; but he shivered a little, and he thrust his hand and the iron hook out toward the fireplace, as if to warm them in the shaft of moonlight.

"I'm sittin' here, because here's where I belong, stranger. This is the Peavy House, an' I'm Peavy Joe; an' right here's where I belong. Who, I'd like to know, has a better right to sit here, 'longside my own fireplace in my own kitchen, than I? What I'd like to know is, what you're doin' here yourself."

"Old Peavy Joe, eh?" remarked the stranger musingly. "Old Peevish Joe, it seems, would be a better name for you." He chuckled.

"See here now, young feller, don't be answering me flip like. My eyes ain't what they used to be, an' I can't make you out very well in this poor light; but I take it from the impertinence in yer voice that ye be a young feller without due respect fer us old uns."

The traveler laughed lightly.

"No disrespect intended, old man. And as for my being here—I just dropped in for a friendly chat."

"Well, when I tell ye more about myself, I reckon ye'll be disrememberin' the chat, an' startin' on yer way like a good runnin' horse in a fast race! Like as not ye be a stranger in this neck o' the woods an' ain't heerd much talk about old Peavy Joe. An' like as not ye ain't never heerd nothin' about what sort o' business went on in this house on a night nigh on to ten year ago. There was a riot here that night, stranger —a riot for fair, fought by crazy, drunken lumberjacks, with peavies, an' chairs, an' double-bitted axes!"

The traveler laughed again and crowded closer to the old man.

"I'm not afraid of what happened here ten years ago," he said. "Tell me about that riot, old man. There is something in the story that has to do with a satchel full of jewelry?"

Old Peavy Joe straightened, either in surprise or in suspicion, at the traveler's bold reply. Then after straining his weak, old eyes toward the stranger in a long moment of study, he began his tale:

"A bunch o' lumberjacks from the Big Star camp was in here celebratin' sort o' peaceful like one Saturday night, when another bunch came up from the big camp down on Little Rib. I never rightly knew what started 'em off, but before long the two outfits was a battlin' each other like wild Comanche Injuns. They hewed each other considerable with double-bitted axes, an' seven or eight good shanty boys gave up the ghost that night before the row was finished. It was a horrible show, for sure, stranger; but still there was something funny about it. too. There was several travelers here puttin' up fer the night, an' when the battle started, some of 'em got excited an' run bewildered among the boys. It was real comical to see 'em—they was that bad scared. There was one young feller in the bunch that I noticed particular; an' I have to laugh every time I think about him. An' here's where the story of the jewelry comes in. He must have been a travelin' salesman for some jewelry outfit, for he had a satchel plumb full o' rings an' watches—diamonds and gold—ten thousand dollars worth, most like. Well, he started down the big stairs out there, half dressed, with his satchel in his hand. Half way down he tumbled, an' the satchel flew out of his hand, an' came open when it landed on the barroom floor. The little feller scrambled on down the stairs an' made for the front door; but he got befuddled an' started back up the stairs. I never see anyone as scared as he was. He was almost too scared to run. Stranger, it was real funny to see him—scared as a rabbit, an' runnin' right back into the thick of the battle. An' he had forgot all about his satchel full o' gold and diamonds. A great big feller from Little Rib was standin' at the head o' the stairs with a peavy in his hands. The hook was broken off that peavy, but the spike was long an' sharp. Well, the big feller threw the peavy down the stairs like a spear, an' it struck the little feller in the chest before he reached the landin', an' it went plumb through him, knockin' him over backward to the floor at the bottom."

"What became of the satchel of jewelry?" asked the traveler when the old man had finished his grewsome tale. His thin lips twitched again into an odd smile—a smile which was not altogether one of amusement.

"I gathered it up and hid it; an' then as I came back into the barroom again, I stopped the bit of an axe, that was meant for someone else, with the side of my head; an' that was all I saw of the row."

"Where did you hide the jewelry?" asked the traveler.

Old Peavy Joe squinted at the speaker with his near-sighted eyes for a long moment, as if in doubt whether or not to tell him.

"I didn't intend to tell ye that, stranger," he said at last, "but seein' as ye seem to be a pretty sociable sort o' chap, an' the bravest man that has come along this way in many a day, I'll show you where I hid it, an' you can take it along with you. That stuff can never do me any good here. What use could I have for diamonds an' gold? Here's the whole lot, in here, just where I threw it," he finished.

The old fellow rose and led the traveler to a large wood-box beside the fireplace. There they gazed upon an open bag half filled with yellow gold and sparkling jewels, where it lay partly hidden by the trash.

"Go ahead an' fish 'em out o' there, stranger, an' ye can have 'em."

The traveler shook his head slowly, and smlied his odd smile.

"They wouldn't do me any good either," he answered.

"Why not?" queried old Peavy Joe in surprise.

For an answer the traveler unbuttoned his threadbare coat and threw it open. And with his near-sighted old ghost's eyes Peavy Joe saw a great hole in the traveler's narrow chest that a man could run his fist through. Then Peavy Joe nodded in understanding.

"So, you was the funny little feller that cashed in that night with some of the best o' us, eh? I should 'a' recognized ye when ye first come in."

POISON GAS

By Alice Dyar Russell

A gnarled, grey, shrivelled little creature in a narrow room, shuffling about; outside, the voice of the winter wind, rising and falling.

The tidy stove, the incredibly tidy and burnished stove, stood like a shrine that is watched and tended. Near it the supper table was neatly laid with two plates, two knives and forks, two cups, and a squat green pitcher in the middle. There was a look of decent poverty about the place. Repeated scrubbing had bleached the bare floor white; shining was the case of the carved wooden clock; twinkling a row of bright plates on the dresser.

Through the cracks, along the floor, crept the hostile cold. Old Alma shuddered, as she left the stove, where she had been hovering over a small iron kettle, and went to the window. The cold breathed from it. She hitched her shoulders under their crocheted shawl, and peered out through the curtains.

"A fearful night! with the bitter wind, and the snow piling up. God pity our soldiers! God pity the poor! Ach, what can it be, that keeps Immanuel so late?"

Her weary old face was fixed in an expression of anxiety and woe. She snuffled constantly, and the wrinkles under her eyes were always moist.

A dozen times she put her nose to the icy pane; a dozen times she wet her lips hungrily as she lifted the cover of the kettle; before the opening of the door brought in a freezing draught and a nimble, black-coated figure.

Like his wife, Immanuel was wrinkled and old, but his soul was eager, lively, brimming with hope.

"Where have you been so long, Immanuel?" she asked, timidly; but she got no answer. He stamped to the stove, turning himself around to shake off the snow, and rubbing his numbed hands. As he rubbed, he seemed to be rubbing into life more than his chilled blood. A secret, inner glee began to glow. With the satisfaction which grew warmer and more avid on his sharp-edged face there was indeed something sin-

ister and repulsive. A hidden beast within him seemed licking its chops at the prospect of some horrid feast.

Alma emptied the coarse stew of onions and fish into a dish at her husband's side of the table. She wiped the kettle with a round of bread and put it on her own plate. Without a word to each other the two sat down.

The old man's eyes behind their scholar's spectacles were bright and greedy. He ate rapidly, noisily. His wife's wistful glances he did not meet.

After the meal, while she fussed with the fire, he turned to her, chuckling unctuously.

"Put on more coal, Alma, and yet more! Stir it up, can't you. Others may shiver tonight—may freeze—but shall we not warm ourselves up for once, eh?"

Alma gaped stupidly at him. "There are two buckets only of coal, Immanuel, and we have no money to buy more."

"Money? I have money—much money!" He touched his pocket, and chuckled again. "Make it warm, Alma—warm, I tell you! Too often I have sat and shivered in this house—it shall be so no longer—not one day longer. For those who can pay, there is coal—there shall be coal for us from this night forth. Open that draft now; empty your bucket!"

Her jaw dropped, but she turned at once to obey. As the coals rattled into the stove, a tear ran openly down her cheek. Immanuel cared; she did not care. What could money do for her? A little more food, a little more fire—yes; but much food and many coals could not reconstruct her broken world.

The dairy butter, the fat poultry, the good sausage, the spicey kuchen, if she saw them all spread out on her table once more, what would it matter? The days when neighbors sat over their dinner, and joked together, when one had a heart to relish fine victuals, were gone. Gone was the sound of cheerful laughter. Tears and curses mingled in every house. On the streets were no plump and rollicking children at play, but haggard women, and men made hideous by many bloody agents. Long, long ago, she and Immanuel had buried their only child, and she had learned to give thanks to God for that gentle, untimely passing.

Immanuel talked of money—much money. Could money bring back her Immanuel that had been, the sweet, gentle spirit for which, in these times, she sickened? That Immanuel, she knew, had gone beyond human power to recall. He, whose heart used to be pitiful over the pain and sadness of every living thing—who would not kill a fly! What poison was it that could transform her old Immanuel, their good Emperor, all mankind, into beings of cruelty and hate? The face of her very God seemed altered.

She had a shudder still for the memory of the days when Wilhelm's armies were marching over Belgium and into the fields of France. She neither ate nor slept for awful fear and sorrow. But Immanuel had not been sad—only lifted up. The burnings and killings over which she wept such bitter tears he had brushed aside with, "Pooh, this is war! It is for the glory of the Emperor and our Fatherland. What do women know of these things?"

A fiery exultation burnt out every gentle element in his nature. The air they breathed, of sweet and gentle things, became to him insupportable. Ambitions, lusts, cruelties obsessed him, in common with that far-off, outer world from which she shrank in horror.

During the last months their situation had gone from bad to worse. Her husband had grown so strange and fierce and absorbed, Alma was overcome with foreboding and terror. Their savings were eaten up. Immanuel had ceased to attend his dwindling classes, and spent the whole of his time, often nights as well as days, in the little laboratory off from her kitchen. And all his work, all his plans, his very comings and goings, he hid from her, his old woman, who once had known everything he did.

Strange men had visited him of late, men before whom she cringed, who spoke with authority. The money her husband had in his pockets—was it from these men he got it, and for what? Ach, if he would only teach his boys again, and come back to himself, she would throw that money into the fire! It was not money that had made them happy in the days when she and Immanuel would walk on Sundays in the little park, those days when there were not always piteous blinded

men to pass, and human wrecks in chairs; only placid couples like themselves, who thought of the good dinner waiting at home. And Minna, her sister, whom she loved, used to drop in of an evening. Minna! Minna's husband was dead, her sons were dead, and Minna had better be dead.

Dead—dead—so many dead, and so horribly. Her mind ran on the horridness—on men whose arms and legs were blown off—men with no jaws—no noses—men with stomachs shot through. Ach, what good would money, or yet more money, do her? She dropped the poker, and turned.

Immanuel was snuggled in his chair, feet thrust out, shoulders hunched up, from behind half-closed lids a gleam rested on the tips of his delicately balanced fingers.

"You answer me, now! How did we pay the fish-woman last week? and how did you buy that glass and those powders in your shop? and how comes that money in your pocket now, Immanuel?"

He grinned at her, delaying speech for a moment.

"Thy Immanuel is no longer the school-master, Alma, that thou shouldst speak so. Thou art not to be blamed, perhaps, but understand now that rough times are over, and temper thy tongue. We shall eat sausage again, and capon, and light what fires we please. We shall have what we choose to have—we have come up in the world! I mean not to be slow in asking for my reward, for I know what it is that I have done—what the big chemists with their fine laboratories could not do—I know I have it in my little shop, and my little shop alone, to change history, my woman!"

For a long time Alma pondered the matter, with her watery old eyes fixed on her husband's face.

"Immanuel, how can this be true—what you are saying?"

"Why, then, should I lie to you?" he answered roughly. "You shall hear something now, Alma, that will make you stare. Did you think these months that I have been making messes for school boys? Why have I not told you? Women babble, good Alma.

"I had an idea—long ago even at the Gymnasium I had that idea. But why work it out? said I then. I did not foresee—but when in the summer I met Ertzbahn, and things

were going badly at the front, it came back to me—that idea —and I began my work. All the money I could scrape together went into materials. Still, it was difficult—more materials, always more, I needed. But I worked on, and when that leetle idea began to grow, began to come true, Alma, a word or two to the right person, and there was money enough—yes, yes, God helping me, there was money then!" He rubbed his hands with the gloating gesture she had seen before. "You would not believe me, Alma, if I told you where I have been this day; but you will believe one day soon, when I, Immanuel Hoffman, receive the decoration of the Emperor!"

A spark of life flickered in the old woman's face. She put up her hand to smooth her scraggly grey locks, and smiled for a moment like a pleased child.

"That will be grand, Immanuel! What is it you have made which so pleases our good Emperor? Is it some medicine for the wounded, Immanuel? That would be nice, and I should be so proud!"

"Medicine? Hee-hee!" cackled the old man. "That is good! Yes, yes, Alma, it is medicine—a medicine I have designed for the wicked English. Ach, what a cure it will work! I ache to see that cure with my own eyes. Only a little time, Alma, until quantities of a sufficiency can be manufactured, then we shall hear news indeed! Can eyeless men fight, my dear? Medicine? Hee-hee!"

Alma began to tremble. Her whole body shuddered as with the ague. "W-what—w-what do you mean?" she stammered. "You must tell it to me so I will understand, Immanuel."

Carefully then, and with some detail, he described a new sort of gas bomb, worked out by his own inventive genius, and believed to be wholly unequalled in the history of chemicals for curious and deadly efficiency.

Alma gulped. Her mouth foolishly opened and shut. She was a simple soul, easily frightened.

"Immanuel, does it—does it—kill?"

He emitted a slight snort. Excited color stained his shaven cheek. "But yes!"

"Right—right away?"

He explained in picturesque details how it killed.

"Nein, nein!" she squealed like a caught rabbit.

"But yes," he smacked his lips. "There is no doubt. Exactly so will it act. We have demonstrated." Again he elaborated. "And it is my invention—mine entirely. My brain conceived it." He tapped his bulging forehead. "My hand carried it out. I alone have the formula. Within two months, from my small workshop, that idea of mine will spread death and terror on every front in Europe!"

Old Alma sank down awkwardly until her stiff knees rested on the floor. She clutched his hands and rubbed them wildly with her cheek. Her cracked voice rose.

"Immanuel, Immanuel, thou wilt not do such wickedness! Our Emperor has himself gone mad to allow it. The world is filled with blood and tears. That thou shouldst seek—oh, not thou, not thou, Immanuel!"

He tried to speak, to pull his hands away, but she held them fast, wetting them with her tears.

"In the name of the august God who pities his suffering children, for the sake of that little one whom I suckled and thou carried tenderly, so long ago, listen, Immanuel——"

He made a movement with his foot, angrily, that overthrew her. "Thou plaguest me, Alma! Is there not work for thee to do? Get to the washing of the plates—and shut up the house for the night. I wish to go to my rest."

It was late when she lay beside him in their bed on the nice feather mattress she herself had made before they were married. She held herself rigid, so as not to disturb Immanuel. Her husband was much fatigued and snored loudly.

Old Alma did not close her eyes. Blinking, aching, running with water, they stared at the dark. That blank curtain of the night moved—flamed—was alive with images. Without pause, in endless procession, she saw them—men marching. They turned mutilated faces toward her—they flung their arms in torture. Writhing bodies—blackened, eyeless heads!

Somewhere, she knew, there were other things than these horrors that froze her blood. The world had not always been this savage place. Her mind made a frantic effort to call to

life the beloved Immanuel of the past. How the children used to flock about him! He petted them like any woman; his arms were always open, his heart was always tender. Stray, unhappy animals followed him. He had once bandaged the crushed paw of an old cat. He would go quite silly over the pain of any living thing. She remembered how he had crooned with tears over a hurt wrist of her own. And in the dim years past, when she and Immanuel had been young, his tender, paternal face had been bent over the soft body of a little child. She tried to hold fast the darling picture of the baby, but it slipped away from her. In its stead were seared eyes, blistered tongues, contorted arms. They would not go. Would they stay forever? Had she lost the image of her baby, as she had lost Immanuel?

Ach, it was the devil's work Immanuel had done in his little shop. There had been brought together the terrible acids—there had been revealed the formula, which was to make, he told her, a million eyeless men—Immanuel Hoffman's formula. Immanuel! Under the piled-on comforters and blankets, beside the warm, sleeping body of her husband, Alma's teeth chattered.

"A woman's silly notions—all women are silly," he had said.

She knew what must be done. Suddenly and irrevocably, she knew it.

She slipped from the bed very softly so as not to wake Immanuel. Immanuel must be very tired, he slept so soundly. Shivering, she thrust her withered feet into knit bed shoes and wrapped the grey crocheted shawl over her nightgown.

The walls creaked with the cold. In the kitchen the fire had burned down to embers. The wind shrieked and rattled at the windows. She was sniveling as she lit a small hand lamp. By its light her face looked scared and yellowish grey.

She went first into Immanuel's laboratory, and in a kind of blundering despair examined the long table, the sink, the bottles of chemicals, the curious tubes and vessels.

"If I were only not so stupid," she thought. "Then it would be so easy." But all that Immanuel had ever tried to teach her had gone in one ear and out the other. It was no

use to linger here.

She shuffled back to the kitchen, and pulled open the drawer of the table. For a long time she stood in agonized indecision. The knives were very sharp, but the old woman knew herself. No, there was only one way, one way that would be sure. She looked about the room. Everything was in perfect order; her face smoothed itself into satisfaction at the sight.

Now she wasted no time. She worked swiftly. She emptied the wood-box of its kindling and carried a load into the bed-room. She reappeared to take in several sticks of large wood. She opened the door into a back shed and brought in a can of oil. She soaked the immaculate floor. She made a trail into the bedroom. She piled wooden chairs near the door, and soaked them, too, with oil.

All was ready. She stood still, panting. Suddenly, with an inarticulate sound in her throat, she pressed her ragged grey head against the walls of this room where she had lived and cooked and scrubbed so long, and kissed them passionately, over and over.

But her eyes were dry at last when she struck a match and passed quickly into the bedroom. As she kicked off her shoes and climbed into the bed a faint crackle came to her ears. Whimpering a little, and feeling rather sick, she put one arm over the slumbering form of her husband and lay still.

SABBATH SUNSHINE

By Ruth Kathryn Gaylord

All through his cheerful, freckled boyhood, David had held his Uncle-Doctor's horse by patients' hitching-posts, and sat very straight, waiting for the doctor's approval. At twenty-one, the same cluster of freckles twinkled between his eyes, and he still adored the gruff old doctor's every move.

The pleased color still flushed his cheek when the older man cried out: "Here, Dave! Tend to these confounded bills, will you? I couldn't get a cent myself."

"I'll do my best." David swept the papers into a hasty pile. "You'll be back Monday? Anything else?"

"Yes." Among the assortment of handles in the old umbrella rack, the doctor fumbled for his own. "Yes—don't lose your heart to Ellen Hawley while I'm gone."

"Lose heart?" David puzzled.

"Lose your heart, I said, to that Hawley youngster." Having found his pet and hideous handle, the doctor dragged it forth and shook it so violently that it flew open and had to be caught and shut again. "Confounded patent affairs!"

"It's all right now, sir," David hesitated. "Did you—did you say Ellen Hawley?"

"Yes, I did. Just look out, that's all. There's an old poem somewhere about maids looking prettier in the Sabbath sunshine. Looks like a pleasant Sunday. 'Bye."

The screen door banged as usual after him, and as usual, David went and latched it. By way of the sitting and dining rooms, Amanda's voice was wafted in from her kitchen work. It was one of Amanda's patriotic days. Yesterday she had gone through the old love songs. Vaguely, David was glad this was a patriotic day, for tomorrow would, of course, be hymn day. There would be no more love days till Monday.

Amanda rose valiantly toward "the rockets' red glare," but she fell short, and David with a shiver escaped to the orchard. There in the stillness, he lay and plucked at the long grass all about him. He didn't care any more about Ellen than he had about Celie Crossley last year or Bess Hawkins the year before; yet the doctor had never told him not to lose his heart to Celie or Bess.

David chewed hard on a wisp of grass. Of course, he had been with Ellen lots of late; she was an awfully pretty girl. But he didn't—David shrank from the short, solemn word—he didn't care that way. When you cared that way, you dreamed about her at night, and you couldn't eat, and it made you tremble all over just to look at her. Oh, no! David drew a long, calm breath; he was quite relieved to find he could reason it out so easily. It proved his point. You didn't reason about such things, when you were in—when you cared.

Besides, uncle didn't want him to—care; and uncle's wish

was law to David. Well, he didn't care. Why hadn't he told uncle so, when he said that? Now he would have to bring the subject up himself. David didn't quite know how you brought up subjects like that.

A high, sweet voice close by—Ellen calling across the street to Bess, on her way from the morning mail. For a second, David lay perfectly still in the grass, hoping she would go by. Then he rolled over and got up; he wouldn't be foolish. Foolishness was the first sign of—caring.

With an air intended to be nonchalant, he sauntered over to the road, but he didn't succeed so well, for he happened to remember about folks noticing. Suppose she thought he—cared!

Ellen looked up and waved her letter to him. "H'lo!"

David knew what he was supposed to say: "H'lo, d'you see any in my box?" Instead, he heard himself mutter: "I see—er, Uncle Sam was good to you."

"Going to choir tomorrow?"

It was the old question, and the old answer should have been: "Sure. See you there." David stumbled over the words: "Sure—I—er, I rather expect to see you there."

With a little cry, Ellen caught his arm and shook it. "Wake up, Dave! Whatever has got into you?"

David looked at her wildly. There was a wee, throbbing place on his arm, where her fingers had clutched him. "I don't know," he said, "but something has——"

"Well, I hope it'll get out over night." Ellen tossed her head a bit, and went on down the road.

David, looking after her, suddenly realized. That was it! She had her hair done differently, all piled on her head in a shiny mystery of waves. Of course, he hadn't known what to say. Ellen had never looked like that before.

He went into the house and ate supper. His own appetite encouraged him. He went to bed early, and tried to think about lions and tigers; lions were much better than Ellen, in a dream. Consequently, he did dream about lions.

David was early to breakfast for the first Sunday morning in his life, and Amanda commented more than volubly. In spite of his dreams, he ate well, until suddenly, Amanda's

voice boomed: "I love thy—" In another second, he recognized the old hymn, "I love thy church, O God." But it was too late. With a little, choked cry, he got up without touching his doughnut.

Between breakfast and choir time, he reasoned himself into a very satisfactory state of mind. Why, it wasn't a year ago at the Sunday School picnic, that he and Ellen had skipped down hill, holding hands, while the crowd cheered them. The very idea of shaking over a girl's fingers!

He was just a moment late to rehearsal, and Ellen leaned back to hand him an extra copy of the anthem. He reached for it hastily, and his fingers slipped and touched hers. The anthem fluttered to his feet. When he recovered it, the paper trembled in his hold, and his heart fairly choked him, it throbbed so.

David muttered something, and stumbled past the others into the vestry. When he came back, there was an empty seat near the door and he took that.

David had been taught to keep his eyes on the minister. This morning, he stared at him with gloomy intensity, but he neglected to smile at his first anecdote. It was just then that a shutter swung open, and a slant of sunlight gleamed on Ellen's hair. David watched it shimmer and twist at the least turn of her head, and he muttered aloud when the shutter banged back into place.

After church, the boys always waited for the girls, as they came out one by one, tilting their hats or patting their hair into place. From sheer habit, David hung on the outside of the group, and when Ellen came past, he followed her down the steps.

Out in the full sunlight, she turned to him. "Let's go home through the orchard."

They went in at the lower gate, and strolled through the short grass under the old apple trees. Once, Ellen's tiny heel slipped on a small fallen apple, and David steadied her.

It was very still out there, and the sunlight slanted through the leaves on bright little patches of grass. Somewhere overhead, a bird twittered. Ellen stood still and looked up to see; and the sunlight wavered across her face and hair.

"Ellen!" The boy choked on the name, but she put out a hand for silence. He caught it and held it tightly. He was no longer trembling; he wondered how he could ever have been afraid. Now Ellen was staring at him, with the sunlight on her face. "David, you mustn't."

In a flash, David remembered. The doctor had told him not to do this very thing he was doing. He hadn't even waited till he got home; he was doing it on the sly, while he was away. He must stop right away. David stared down at Ellen. He must let go her hand, and apologize. He must never look at her again. He must—

But in that moment Ellen smiled at him—a little, frightened smile. "David!" she breathed.

David Hooker forgot his doctor's command; he forgot to be afraid; he forgot everything in the world but Ellen Hawley.

Dr. Lawrence came back Monday. David, white-faced but exultant, met him at the door.

"Well, been a good boy?"

"No, sir, I've disobeyed you."

"Stuff and nonsense! What's struck you?"

David stood a bit straighter. "I'm in love with Ellen Hawley, and I've told her so."

The doctor made an inarticulate sound. "Sabbath sunshine," he muttered.

David lifted his head. "Yes, sir, it was; but this morning I was up to see her, and she had on her mother's gingham apron, and her hair was done the old way, and it was raining. But I loved her just as much. I think I must have loved her right along, but—" David pushed back his hair from his forehead—"but I never should have known it, sir, if you hadn't warned me. It was rather like telling children not to put beans in their noses."

The doctor slammed his desk shut. "Not at all, boy, not at all," he snapped. "I wanted you to put 'em up!"

From beyond two closed doors, there arose a smothered wail. "Boy, what's that noise?"

David grinned. "That's Amanda 'Seeing Nelly Home.' It's a love day, you know."